

The Failure of the Reasonable Man

WHEN historians say that madmen were responsible for the attempt to capture the world that led directly to the Second World War, they are using no offhand characterization. There may have been a method to the Nazi and Fascist madness, but it was madness none the less.

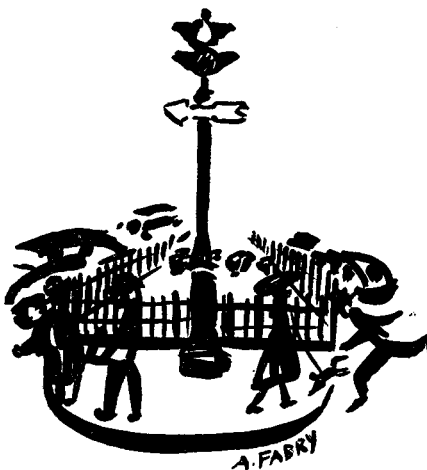
What will the historians say about the present crisis? They will have before them abundant evidence, it seems to us, to indicate that the breakdown that began promptly at the end of World War II reflected the failure of reasonable men. Never before in history did the man of reason command such power and prestige as he did in 1945. Never before did reason have behind it such a clear preponderance in any potential mobilization of the world's peoples. Indeed, at San Francisco in 1945 the claim of victory was made largely in the name of reason over the juggernaut of irrational and anti-humanistic force.

From that magnificent perch in 1945 reason has slipped a long way. Today, as in the Thirties, reason is being forced into a defensive position as bit by bit its preponderance in the world has been whittled away. What has happened to bring about such a costly fall from grace and power? It is too easy to say that reason went on the defensive just because Soviet policy went on the offensive. Too easy, because it doesn't explain why reason didn't itself go on the offensive in what was largely a

war of ideas. Nor does it explain why reasonable men—by which we mean those who spoke for the democracies—failed to take full advantage of the opportunity for world leadership that was theirs for the asking.

The failure of reasonable men since the end of the war consists of this: That they were unable or unwilling to carry over into the making of the peace the same boldness, the same daring and dynamism that won the war and that was no less needed to win the peace. All the sterile clichés that are part of the ritual of apparent reason were used to sanctify the timid and inadequate approach to the making of the new world. The big need was to invest the new organization of the nations with definite powers of government comprehensive enough to deal with the threats to the peace. If such a proposal had been made and then blocked by Soviet intransigence, then at least we might have been able from the start to place the Soviet on the defensive in the battle of ideas. But we ourselves held back, intoning the pretty phrases of reason to the detriment of the cause of reason. "The world is not yet ready for government." "The American people are not ready." "No other nation would accept." "It's far-fetched." "Let's wait twenty-five or fifty years." "Time will work for us." "Progress is possible only through gradualism." "Let's not be drastic." "The present tensions, given enough time, will dissolve."

But there is no cosmic hocus-pocus that dictates that time will always serve the cause of reason. Time by itself is supremely indifferent to the petty and major problems that beset the human race. If the circumstances favor progress, time favors progress. If the circumstances favor disintegration, time favors disintegration. The job of the truly reasonable man is to create and enlarge those conditions which make progress possible, and to arrest or change those conditions which make disintegration inevitable.



The disintegration of the past four years has not taken place in a vacuum. The conditions were such as to intensify the crisis rather than solve it. The world had become a single potential battlefield. Two nations of approximately equal power, with deep underlying fear and suspicion of each other, emerged from the war convinced that a new war between them at some point was inevitable. The issues between them were deep and real, but not nearly so deep or real as the larger issue confronting humanity itself. That larger issue was whether this planet could remain safe for human habitation, and, if so, whether democratic values could be preserved.

IN SUM, the problem for the reasonable man was not how to win the war but how to avert it—with honor and without knuckling under. It was a difficult problem—perhaps the most difficult one that has ever confronted men of reason in history, but the difficulty was dwarfed by the danger. And yet, critical though the problem was, there were vast resources at the call of the West. It enjoyed preponderance. It was in a strategic position to keep the initial tensions from getting out of hand by proposing the creation of an organization of the United Nations strong enough to guarantee security for the large states and thus deprive any state, large or small, of either the excuse or the opportunity to seek security through expansion. But men of reason proposed and committed themselves to weakness. They justified this approach on the grounds that each passing year would find an almost automatic improvement in world health, forgetting that the principal danger of a weak organization was not so much that it would be unable to deal with crisis situations, but that this very weakness would actually create crisis situations.

We gloried in a phony gradualism and saw the rest of the world in our image. We based our policy—and this is a matter of solid record—on the fact that Russia's atomic energy development would be as gradualist as we would like it to be. We missed officially by five years or more. The consequences of that error could be without parallel in history. Where do we go from here? Not very far, we are afraid, unless we begin to think in terms of what is *necessary* rather than what *may be possible*. But to do this, reasonable men may have to discard the comfortable rote of gradualism, however academically desirable, for something more nearly approximating the urgent and drastic nature of the problem itself.

—N. C.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Are We Being Decoyed?

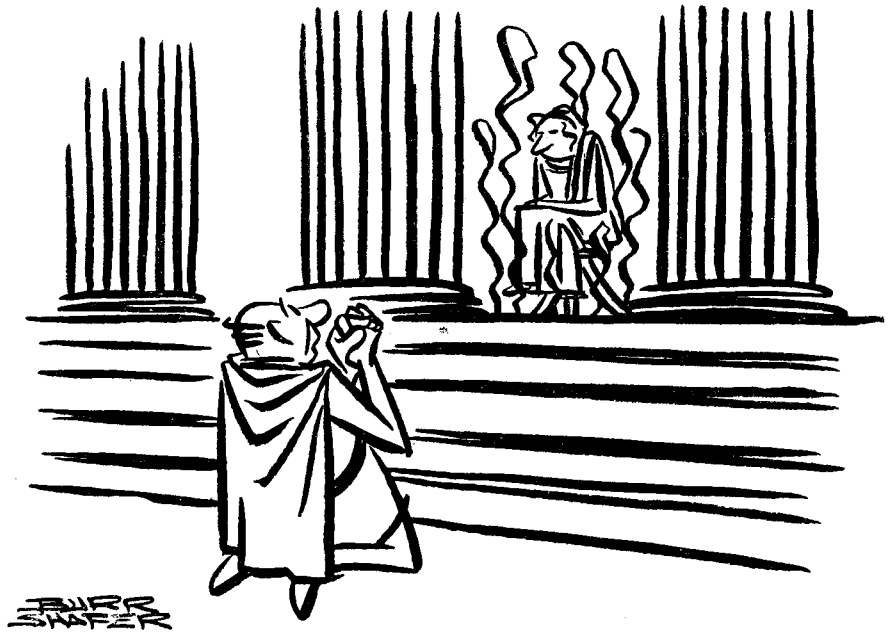
SIR: I have heard that it is dangerous for a writer, or any other person dependent upon public response, to take sides in any controversy. Perhaps caution is the better part of the bank account, and cowardice the builder of respectable annuities. Nevertheless, in so far as I am concerned, I believe that it is better for the self-respect to join battle, in these days, with any force or organization or any individual which attempts to spread hatred among men, than it is to keep silent. I know that I can no longer keep silent if I am to go on living with myself.

For the last year or so several books have been printed purporting to "expose" the Roman Catholic Church as a "danger" to America and to the rest of the world. Now, as a Protestant, I cannot claim to know everything about the Church. But I am convinced of one thing: there is a definite plan under way in America to set one American against another American and the plan is sinister.

If the planners of universal hatred were only original, one could at least be interested in the originality. But they use the same old clichés, the same old lies about the Roman Catholics as they used against the Jews not so very long ago. It would be bore-some, and only stupid, if it were not so dangerous. Ten, nine, eight years ago, they said it was the Jews who controlled the American press, American politics, etc., etc. That, fortunately, did not go over too well in America, as it was so palpably absurd, considering the very small Jewish population here. But the Roman Catholic Church, having so many more members than the Jewish religion, is a wider target for falsehood and calumny, and the ancient lies are being polished up again.

I was thirteen years old when the First World War broke out. But for more than two years before 1914 there was a widespread campaign of vilification and monstrous lies against the Roman Catholic Church in America. Neighbor was set against neighbor, American against American. Now, as in 1912-13, the Roman Catholic Church is being attacked not only in books but by pamphlets and leaflets sent anonymously to many people. I find them in my mail every day. I have checked with many acquaintances, and they are receiving them also. Again, the same old malignancies and baseless accusations are being used. Why? Are we being decoyed again? Is there something going on, silently but purposefully, in the world which we are not to see until it is too late? Lies always have a purpose: disruption, confusion, disorganization. When these are accomplished a people cannot act in unison, cannot protect itself.

It is possible to say to any religion or to any race: "There are rascals, liars, thieves, perjurers, and brutes among you." It would be true, considering that all men are the same. But the danger comes when we confine our accusations to any one race, to any one religion, and insist that we, the accusers, are all without stain. In that



BURR
SHAFFER

THROUGH HISTORY WITH J. WESLEY SMITH

"And the Spartan Military Academy—how will it make out in the big game against Athens?"

insistence lies madness and ruin and death—our own as well as our brother's. In God's name, let there be an end to hatred.

TAYLOR CALDWELL.

Eggertsville, N. Y.

SIR: G. R. Garrett says that a Catholic is guilty of the sin of hatred much less than the non-Catholic [LETTERS, SRL Sept. 17]. However, it seems that the precepts of his church disprove his point entirely. His church forbids him to attend a Protestant church or to read a Protestant Bible. Is the Protestant church guilty of this sin of hatred against his church? His church forbids him to marry a Protestant or a divorced person. Is the Protestant church guilty of this sin of hatred against his denomination or an unfortunate person? His church denies to the bereaved of one who has just passed away certain consolations because of the conditions of death. It does the same for a child who is born and dies under certain conditions. In this way it practises the sins of hatred upon the dead, not even letting them rest with God.

Let Garrett weigh the evidence before he makes such rash statements.

J. J. JONES.

Los Angeles, Calif.

Collective Unconscious

SIR: In the LETTERS section of SRL Oct. 15, Cary F. Baynes defends Jung's theory of "the collective unconscious." I should like to ask Mrs. Baynes if acceptance of this theory does not imply acceptance of Lamarck's theory of the inheritance of acquired characteristics—which most students of inheritance reject, do they not? Without the inheritance of ac-

quired characteristics how could there be a "collective unconscious"?

Virtually the same question might be asked of the Freudians, some of whom perhaps have been embarrassed by the master's outright espousal of what he called "phylogenetic memory" in his last book. "Phylogenetic memory" seems to be a mere euphemism for "collective unconscious." Can there be any "phylogenetic memory" without past inheritance of acquired characteristics?

GREGORY MASON.

New York, N. Y.

Iced Coffee in the Wild West

SIR: In reviewing Wright Morris's "The World in the Attic" [SRL Sept. 24] Kenneth S. Davis refers to "two pages of unfunny dialogue devoted to the outraged surprise of a restaurant waitress" when the central character, a city slicker, orders iced coffee. Mr. Davis adds, incredulously: "The waitress is supposed never to have heard of such a thing."

No pampered Easterner myself, I have an intemperate relish for iced coffee. During an automobile junket from Texas to Chicago, completed only last week, I upset the equanimity of many a Midwestern restaurant waitress by ordering this drink. In few cases could the unfunny dialogue have been committed to only two pages of print. In one restaurant, I remember, I patiently directed the waitress to fill a glass with ice, cover it partially with hot coffee, and then put in additional ice. When she returned with the order she thanked me for having taught her to make iced coffee, but I noted she was peculiarly insensitive to my suggestion that she show her gratitude by making no charge.

ANDREW FOREST MUIR.

Houston, Tex.